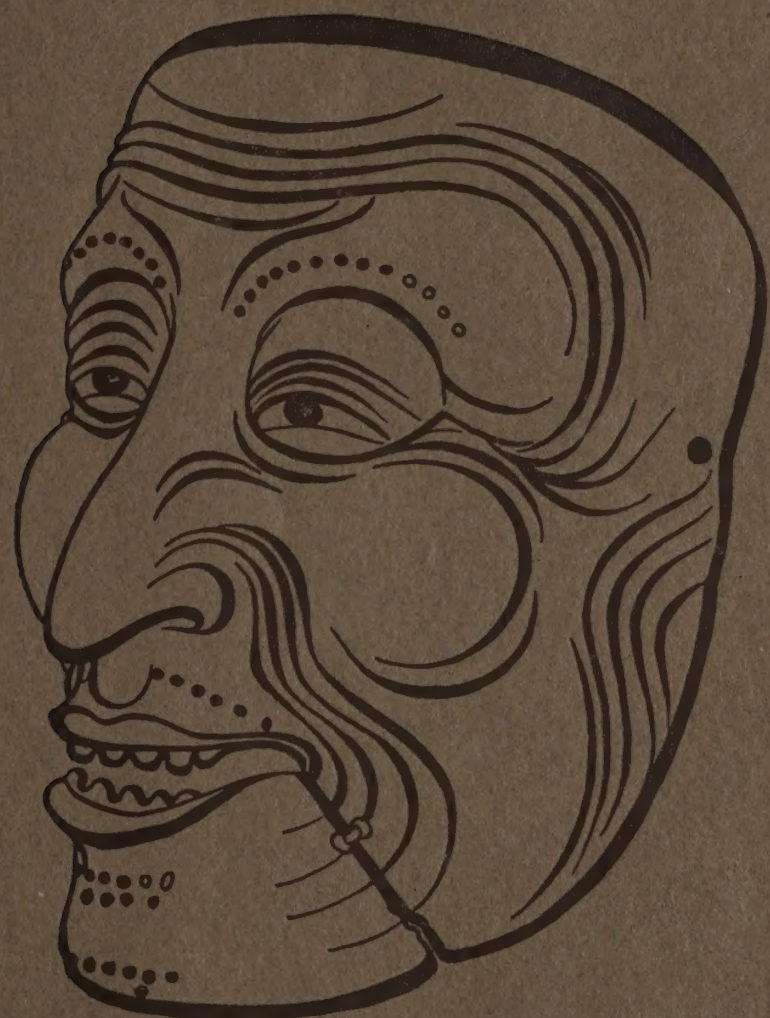


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ANCIENT MASKS.



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ANCIENT MASKS



YAMANAKA & CO.

127, New Bond Street, London.

April, 1913.

MASKS.



VEN the most casual visitor in a museum of classical antiquities cannot fail to notice the masks, chiefly of clay, which were used in Greece for dramatic performances. A rapid glance through an anthropological collection reveals the existence of a far greater number of masks of all sizes, materials and colours amongst the religious paraphernalia and the theatrical properties of Ceylon, India, Indo-China, Java, the Polynesian islands, generally speaking all over the East. Some awesome, others comical, but all replete with meaning and symbolism.

Japan is no exception to the rule except in one particular of considerable importance: the modelling and finish of the mask. Like other countries Japan used masks for religious ceremonies, for popular festivals, and for dramatic performances; and accordingly several types of masks can be fairly sharply differentiated, some of which date back to the Nara period, others having been evolved later. The earliest recorded forms being large masks used in connection with dances of a semi-military, semi-religious character, called Bugaku for short, introduced from China through Korea in the wake of Buddhism. In those archaic dances, music of a Chinese or Korean character, according to the nature of the action, accompanied the posturing of one, two, four or six gorgeously clad performers, the head covered with a mask, moving about on a raised platform.

The mask indicated by its expression the nature of the character represented, there being only the slightest possible form of recitative on the part of the protagonist; hence the large size of the features, the somewhat exaggerated expression, often fierce and compelling, in keeping with the martial nature of the subjects, as Bugaku were drawn from Chinese history and intended to commemorate such events as war and victory. The masks used were sometimes of wood, but more often made of a lighter material: Kanshitsu, consisting in lacquer applied upon a shaped cloth; this technique was a favourite one during the Nara period both for masks and for larger pieces of sculpture. The Nara masks are large, enveloping the whole of the head in many cases, they are of

extreme rarity, a few being recorded here and there amongst the National treasures, besides some scattered in museums and private collections. Their modelling is always intense, powerful, not unlike that of the larger temple sculptures of the same period; and although, at first sight, the projecting noses, the shaggy hair, the exaggerated leer, seem to verge on the grotesque this feeling disappears when one grasps the story each represents and the reasons technical and traditional for their peculiarities.

With the nationalist revival which followed the assimilation of many Chinese ways and ideas, the Bugaku declined in popularity to become slowly relegated in the lumber of hieratic performances which tradition and etiquette alone kept alive from time to time as official pastimes for the entertainment of foreign envoys or the commemoration of auspicious events. An evolution took place in the taste of the aristocracy, and during the Ashikaga period the Court of Kyoto superseded the Bugaku dances of the Kamakura warriors by dramatic performances of a more refined style evolved from the Sarugaku dances, under the name of NŌ UTAI.

Historical and legendary events served as themes for those Nō plays or dances, not unlike in character the Mysteries of Mediaeval Europe, written chiefly by priests and courtiers in a language purposely archaic, with a strong current of Buddhistic influence and moral symbolism pervading their whole fabric.

In the Nō the music is reduced to a minimum, its strains are an accompaniment of drums and flutes emphasising the weird tones of the recitative. The performer strolls in a stately manner upon a stage decorated with a minimum of properties, just sufficient to convey a hint and to conjure in the mind of the educated spectator already acquainted with the subject, a sketchy picture of the surroundings in which the action takes place. The costume of the actor is made of rich brocade, his face is hidden by means of a mask through which the voice comes out much reduced in volume, in a staccato strain of thirteenth-century language, almost a foreign tongue to twentieth-century listeners . . . But it is the masks alone which claim our attention here; they can be divided into two classes: Nō masks properly speaking and comic masks used in the Kiogen interludes. The latter are short farces played by two or three performers, sandwiched between two consecutive Nō when the latter are performed in groups, lasting sometimes several days.

Nō masks are always of wood, painted with a kind of tempera on the face, and sometimes lightly painted or rubbed with lacquer on the inside so as to keep moisture from penetrating into the wood. In certain cases lacquer is used on the face, but this technique is limited to gilt masks and

some of those used in popular festivals, such as the red Tengu mask and the black Sambaso. It follows that moisture applied to the outside of a mask will damage the paint and often utterly spoil it, labels stuck on the face of a Nō mask are an abomination. The Nō being a refined entertainment understood only by the higher classes, its performance like that of Bugaku music became generally hereditary in certain families, and the members of those families were the regular patrons of carvers for close upon six centuries. In the same way the art of carving masks, with which tradition endows a few famous men from the Nara period onwards, became in course of time the monopoly of a few families whose names and peculiarities of technique are recorded in ancient Japanese books dealing specially with the subject.

Masks were collected not only by the artists who used them in their performances but by the Daimyo and wealthy families as well amongst the Samurai class, who, prevented from entering the ordinary theatre by the Dattobasho prohibition, could only enjoy the quieter and more select Nō whilst wearing their swords. Thus, the Nō remained one of the privileges of the feudal classes from its inception right through the whole of the Tokugawa shogunate. The Restoration, breaking up the feudal system destroying the relations between patron and artist placed the latter, like all those dependent upon the Nobles for their subsistence, in an abject state of poverty. Thus the families of Nō performers, in reduced circumstances parted with many of their masks, sold for a mouthful of rice. The richer folks looked upon the revolution in customs as so far reaching that the Nō disappeared almost entirely in the turmoil of westernising reforms. Masks came to Europe and their beauties of expression, their variety endeared them to the hearts of artists and collectors. Where the Bugaku masks might have been misunderstood and thought grotesque until better studied, the Nō mask immediately compelled admiration through sheer merit, and took its place amongst the treasures of plastic art. The French were readily attracted by the qualities of the Nō masks: pioneers like M. L. Gonse bestowed upon them enthusiastic praises, specimens found their way into museums, and hung on the walls of studios, the supply soon became exhausted and Japanese workmen were called upon to make cheap imitations in rough wood and plaster for the delectation of the bazaar hunter, and the "ornamentation" of tea shops . . . Now good masks are rare and perfect pieces fetch large sums, Japan has awoken to a sense of loss, the nationalist return towards the old traditions which has always taken place after every change in politics, etiquette, religion or customs under foreign influence

making itself felt in a Nō revival. Instead of the Nō becoming merely an accessory of receptions and entertainments like the Bugaku of old as it threatened to become in the early years of Meiji, it has reached a place amongst the fashionable distractions of the leisured classes in the New Japan. Societies and Nō clubs have been formed, which purchase, when the opportunity occurs, ancient masks or the productions of modern carvers.

In feudal days the masks were not regular articles of trade, if one excepts those made for festivals; masks by great carvers, like painting, lacquer, swords and fittings from a master's hand became hereditary, passing into the hands of the dealer only when their owner was compelled by adverse circumstances to raise cash—and even then he would usually rather sell to a man of his own class than to a despised chōnin—so that no mention of masks is found in the *Soken Kisho*, the information has to be sought for elsewhere. And when found it is not of any special use to the western collector who seeks in a mask an aesthetic pleasure: we look at a mask and admire its modelling, its expression; we see in it wood and paint turned into a living face, and unless we know the name of the mask, and its meaning, our eyes go no further; some of the most devoted admirers of masks have at times described them with the most startling inaccuracy, like the rose under another name the source of pleasure was no less delectable with an erroneous label. But if one wishes to study the masks from the Japanese expert standpoint, archaeologically, both sides of the mask claim our attention. The style of carving, the design of the features, their modelling, the style and surface of the paint point out the period and to some extent the maker, but the back reveals equally important details: the style of the gouge marks left by the carver are to be noted, some are vertical, some slanting, others horizontal, deep, shallow, etc., the cutting of the eyes, the position of the seal or of the signature, the thickness of the walls, all matters seemingly secondary are of importance in the full appreciation of a mask. The same may be said of the nature of the wood, its weight, its hardness; the very worm holes assume an interesting place in our study, and let it be said as a parenthesis that old masks may be so worm-eaten as to be reduced to a mere shell thin as tissue paper, yet the creature may have left the surfaces almost untouched.

I have mentioned the variety of types amongst Nō and Kiogen masks, the latter are all comic in treatment, calculated to bring laughter by their funny expressions, some smiling, some portraying the idiocy of a servant whose clownish misunderstandings of his master's wishes are a staple

theme of the farce ; the former on the contrary present variety and dignity combined, in about 100 types including men, women, girls, old people, mythical beings, devils, ghosts, gods, etc. The masks of women and girls are classified according to small differences in features and in the lines representing the hair ; those of men are easier to distinguish, and even then mistakes in naming masks are almost unavoidable owing to the material available being scattered and to some types being rarely, if ever, illustrated. The name sometimes refers to the artist who invented the particular type, as for instance Sanko, whose name is preserved in the mask Sankojo, sometimes to the style as in Koomote, or to the personage represented, as in Semimaru, Kagekiyo, Ikkaku Sennin, etc. Other names are purely fanciful like Deigan, Kawazu, or connected with some legend like Shiwofuki, Hashihime, or derived from some misconception like Hannya.

Even in masks bearing the same name and generally similar in the main features, variations of expression are found depending upon the fancy of the performer for whom the mask was made or upon the personal style of the carver. A good monograph on masks is earnestly to be wished for, some attempts at breaking the ground have been made by two or three writers but no complete book is yet available, although if there was a demand for such a work at a moderate price the information scattered in various museums and private collections could easily be gathered.

H. L. J.



CATALOGUE.

1. Very large mask of a Yamabushi, in dried lacquer, Kanshitsu, Nara period. [Plate.]
2. Mask of a Boddhisattva, Kanshitsu, on modelled cloth, Nara period. [Plate.]
3. Curiously carved Oni mask, very heavy, with extraordinarily high features, originally fitted with gilt metal eyes and lips, and painted red.
4. Large wooden mask of a devil, black and red, for a festival, marked Jiuro.
5. Ancient wooden mask for Temple festivals. Otobide type, the old paint flaked off in places, large piece inscribed at back, Tani ai yashiki gohei Nagasakamura Tembun, 5.
6. Tall wooden mask of Hannya, dark coloured mask, for Temple festival.
7. Akujo, flesh coloured mask, light wood.
8. Akujo, red mask, very old piece, worm eaten.
9. Mask of Hannya, with movable tongue, carved wood, lacquered red, old temple mask, the horns off.
10. Ancient wooden mask of an oni, with remains of paint, temple mask used for festivals.
11. Red Choreibeshimi mask of an evil-minded soldier, ancient mask for temple festivals, with eyes and teeth gilt.
12. Fox mask, with movable jaw.

13. Another fox mask, also with articulated jaw.
14. Small Okamé, painted over paper lining. [Plate.
15. Gilt mask, style of Hashihime, inscribed Kawazu. Seal. The hair
black lacquer, on rubbed gold lacquer (fundamè). [Plate.
16. Yace onna, old woman with grey hair (painted) type of Yama uba.
[Plate.
17. Kobeshimi. Red mask with gilt eyes.
18. Masu, woman's mask, the inner side lacquered black, seal Tenka ichi
Kawachi.
19. Jisungami, small mask.
20. Koomote, attributed to Komparu after Iseki Kawachi.
21. Jisungami Hosho Daiyu girl's mask, peculiar style of painting in
parallel "long-grain," horizontal strokes, signed Norinari. [Plate.
22. Okamé, flesh coloured, with sullen expression, polished inside. [Plate.
23. Sankojo, light flesh colour with grey hair.
24. Sambasso, white mask Hakushiki, polished inside and inscribed in
gold lacquer : Miroku saku Kita, Kono.
25. Kokachiki, attributed to Sekigan.
26. Rosō, old man, flesh coloured inside with vertical gouge marks,
white beard.
27. Bishamon, reddish mask with fierce expression, inner side with
horizontal gouge cuts.
28. Kotobide, characteristic piece with slanting gouge cuts inside.
29. Large heavy mask of a devil, with gilt eyes, the face and teeth
lacquered black, the lips and tongue red, the hair now lost.
30. Laughing mask of Okina, with very long chin beard, signed I. (Well).

31. Kuroshiki, black Sambasso mask, the inner side almost smooth.
32. Black laughing mask of a fat priest, with Tama on forehead.
33. Mask of Jo, flesh coloured, without tufts.
34. Daikoku, slate grey, eyebrows lost.
35. Laughing mask of a fat man, with Tama mark incised between eyebrows.
36. Shojo, light brown face, the inside lacquered brown. [Plate.
37. Yace onna, thin emaciated woman. [Plate.
38. Monkey mask, large size, with grey hair.
39. Comic mask, variant of Shiwofuki, seal Tenka Omi.
40. Shojo, red mask, very smooth inner side, stamped *Deme Mitsukazu* (Man-in)
41. Variant of Buaku, flesh coloured, signed Tenka Omi.
42. Reddish mask of a man with under lip sucked beneath the upper teeth, variant of Buaku.
43. Small Kiogen mask of a wizened, toothless old man, very bold technique, painted white.
44. Black mask of Okina, lacquered, said to be by Yasu Kawakatsu.
45. Black mask of a thin man, with chin beard now lost, signed Kawakatsu.
46. Laughing mask of a man, with small chin beard.
47. Okamé, polished inside, weeping expression.
48. Okamé, with smiling expression, smooth inside, inscribed *Jokensai* aged seventy-five.

49. Okamé, fat face, with bad-tempered expression.
50. Okamé, smiling type, with protruding tongue. [Plate.]
51. Yace otoko, thin man, with high cheek bones. [Plate.]
52. Yama uba, reddish mask, with painted grey hair, eyes inlaid brass gilt, teeth partly gilt. Seal, Tenka Ichi Ukan. [Plate.]
53. Sambaso, very old white mask Hakushiki. [Plate.]
54. Otafuku, with high forehead and cheeks, leering expression, with long upper lip, old specimen.
55. Mask of a laughing toothless old man.
56. Laughing mask of Hotei or Ebisu (illustrated on invitation card).
57. Squinting man with an evil expression, the moustache and beard lost, very dark brown colour.
58. Yorimasa, the eyes inlaid brass gilt, the teeth partly gilt, inside painted black. [Plate.]
59. Yorohoshi, flesh-coloured mask of a youth, with straggling hair, the inside light wood somewhat worm eaten. [Plate.]
60. Imawaka, mask of a young man, flesh coloured, lacquered light brown inside. [Plate.]
61. Kyogen mask of a monkey, almost smooth inside.
62. Another monkey mask, signed Tenka Omi.
63. Semimaru, blind flute player, son of Uda Tenno, fine piece painted brown inside. [Plate.]
64. Rojo old woman, type Yace Onna, with grey hair, fine specimen, signed Deme Kohaku. [Plate.]
65. Shiwofuki, the eyes glancing upwards, a wen on the forehead. [Plate.]

66. Sankojo, old mask in the style of Sanko, partly with vertical gouge marks at back, signed Tenka ichi Yukan.
67. Shinkaku, or Makkaku, man's mask with weird expression, signed Tenkaichi Yukan.
68. Yajiro, young woman, similar in type with Mambi, signed Tenka ichi Yukan.
69. Kuroshigé, gilt mask, devil type with metal eyes and gilt teeth.
70. Usofuki, pouting whistling mouth, grey face with whiskers.
71. Tokuwaka, bearded old man. [Plate.
72. Daikoku, painted over paper lining, bearded.
73. Yama uba, old woman with grey hair, smooth inner side with slanting cuts.
74. Shojo, red mask, very smooth inner side.
75. Girl ; type of Mambi (paint damaged at top).
76. Sankojo, with white hair and whiskers, seal Demé.
77. Yacé onna with eyes almost closed, inside lacquered.
78. Chujo, a young man, white mask, inside lacquered black.
79. Ishiobe, mask of an old man, flesh coloured, inner side black.
80. An old man, seal.
81. Rōsō old man, smiling. [Plate.
82. Probably the face of a drowned man. Ghost?
83. A warrior.
84. Intoku, startled expression, with eyes looking upwards.
85. Laughing old man. [Plate.

86. Old man smiling and winking.
87. Buaku, flesh coloured, with gilt eyes, squinting upwards.
88. Comic old man, squinting.
89. Washihana Akujo, bearded warrior's face, with long moustache and chin bead, gilt metal eyes.
- 89A. Laughing young man, with Tama shaped projection between eyebrows.
90. Koomoté, usual type, damaged, signed Yukan.
91. Shaka, youthful mask, lacquered gold.
92. Laughing farmer.
93. Otobide, gilt mask.
94. Green Buaku mask.
95. Kobeshimi, red mask, with closed mouth and gilt eyes.
96. Tokao, with gilt, flesh coloured, angry expression.
97. Variant of Kotobidé.
98. Koomote, girl's face.
99. Mask of a young warrior, flesh coloured.
100. Tokuwaka type of old man, white style.
101. Tokuwaka type of old man, laughing style, reddish colour.
102. Tokuwaka type of old man, dark flesh colour, laughing.
103. Old man, type of Tokuwaka, white.
104. Another, with pained expression.

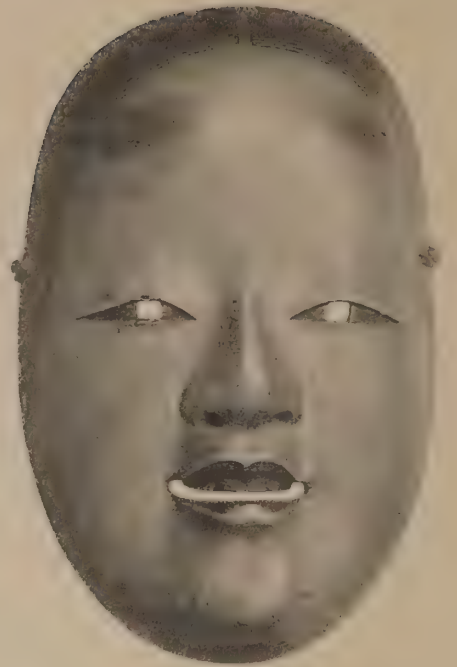


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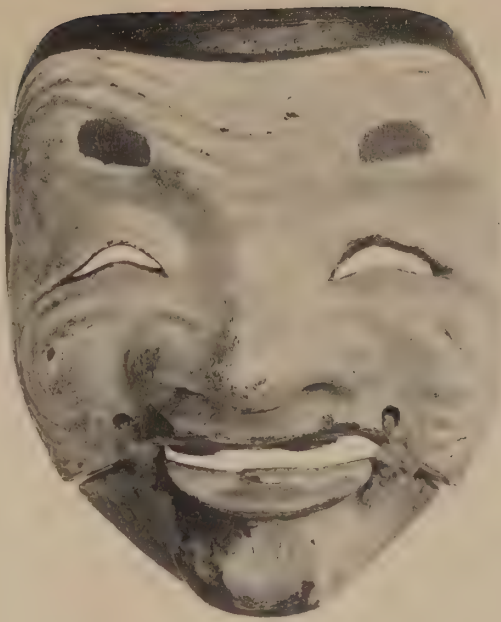


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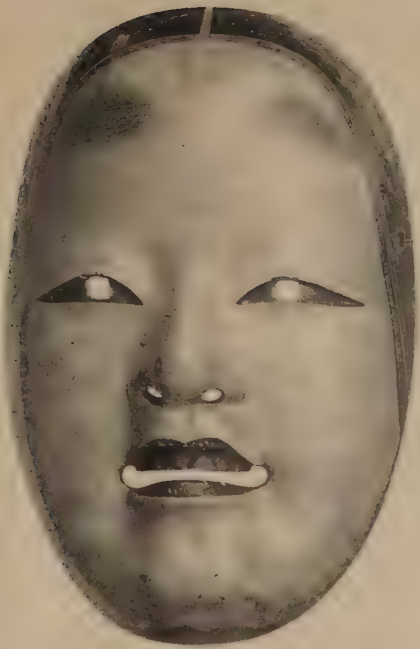
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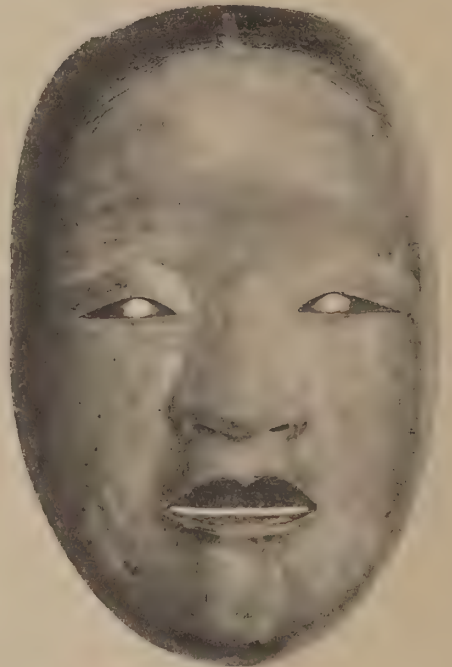
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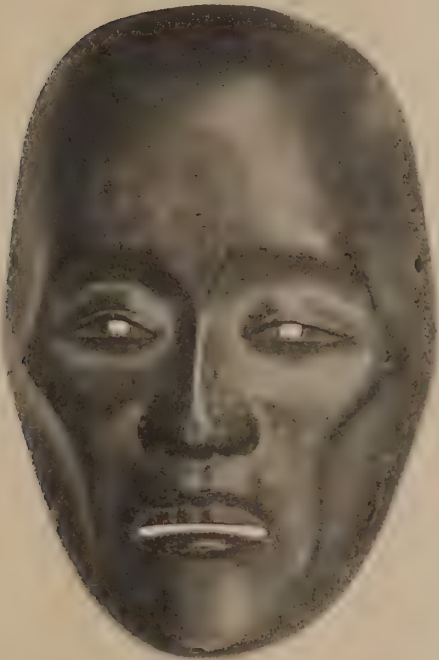
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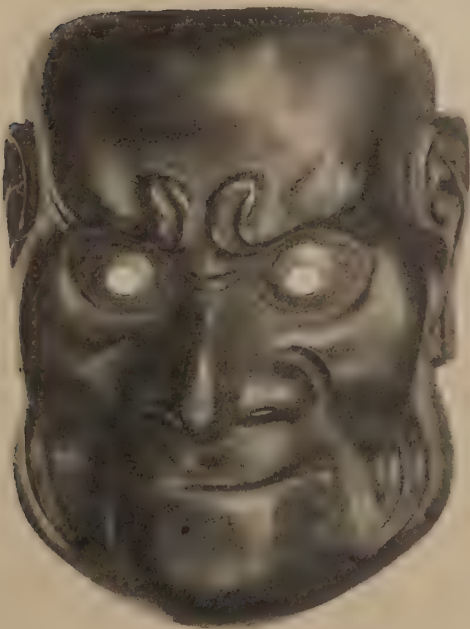
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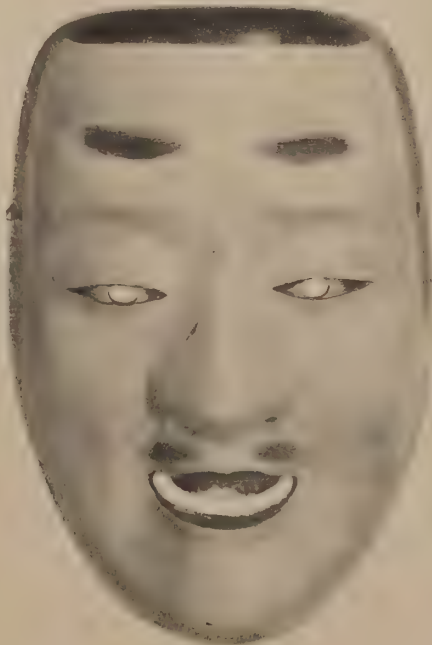
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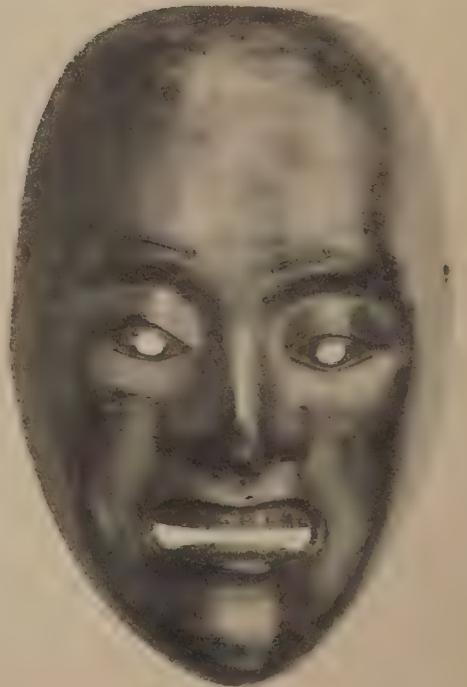


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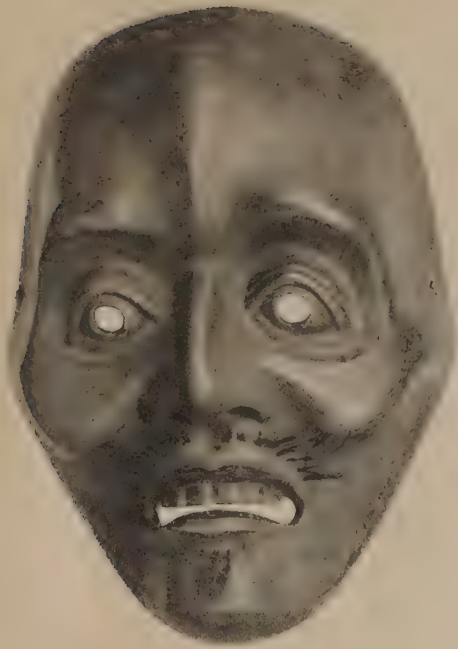


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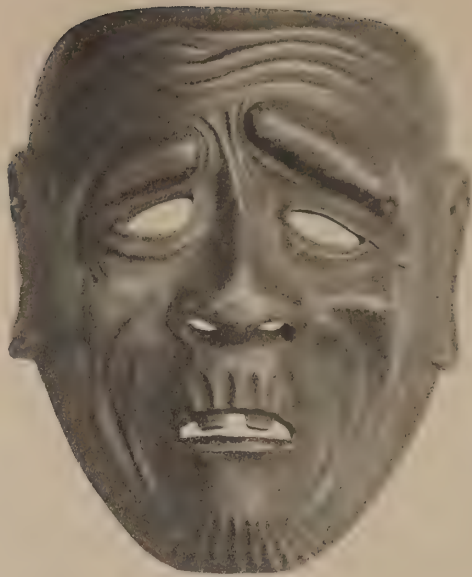
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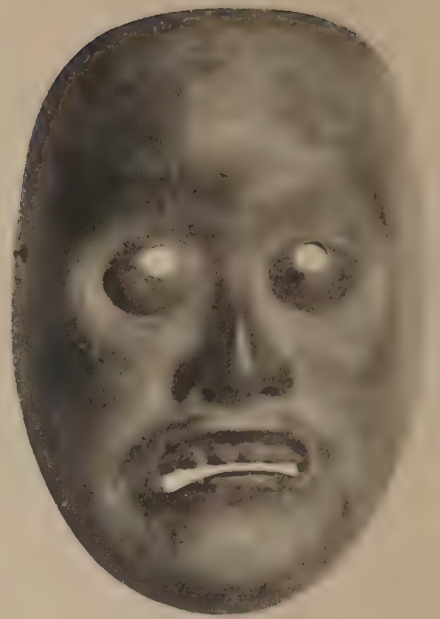
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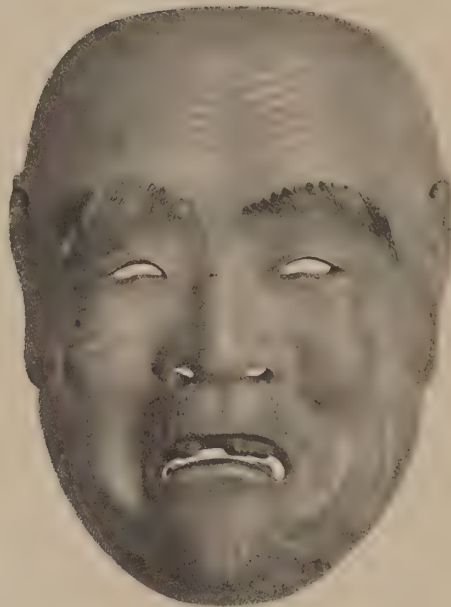
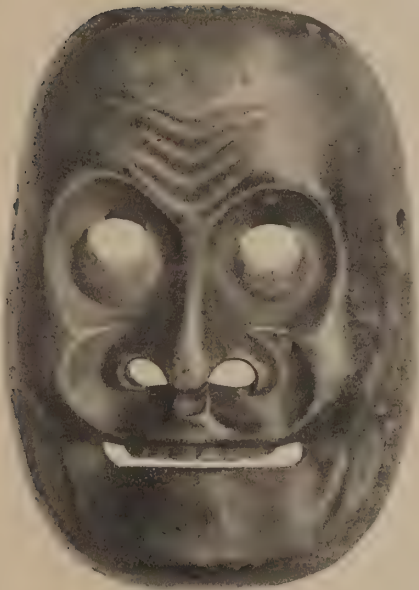
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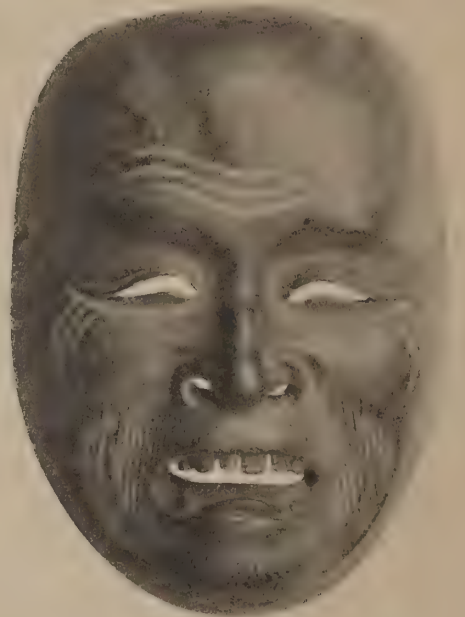
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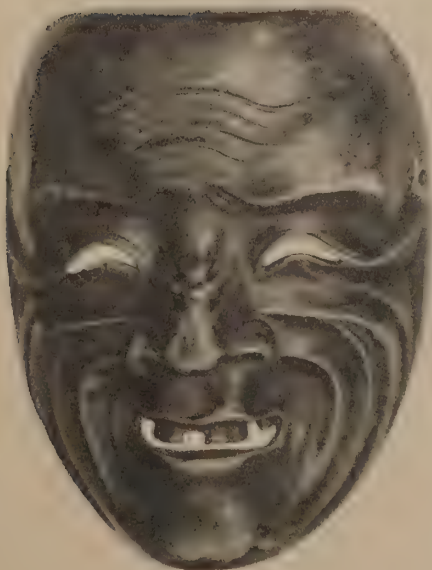
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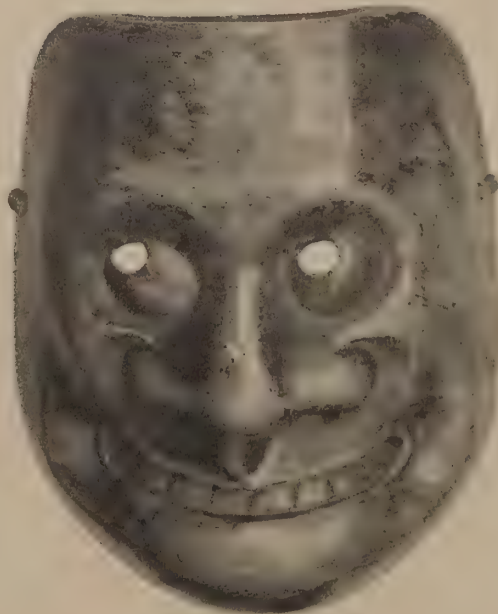
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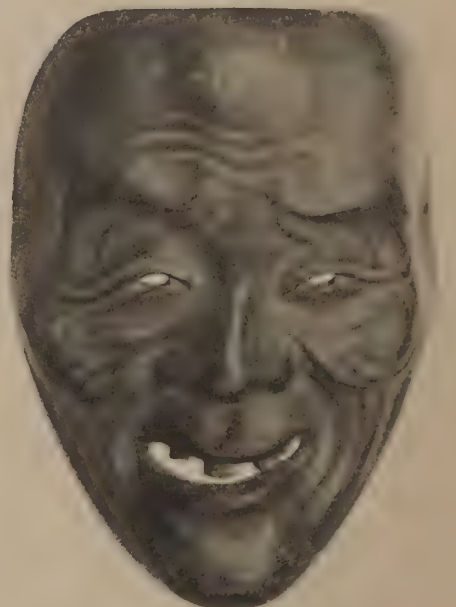
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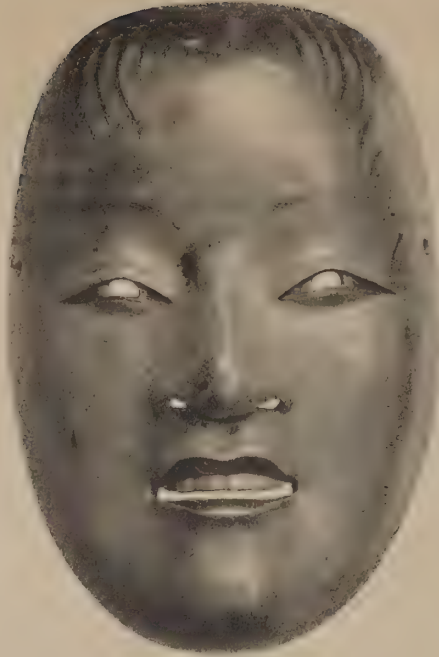


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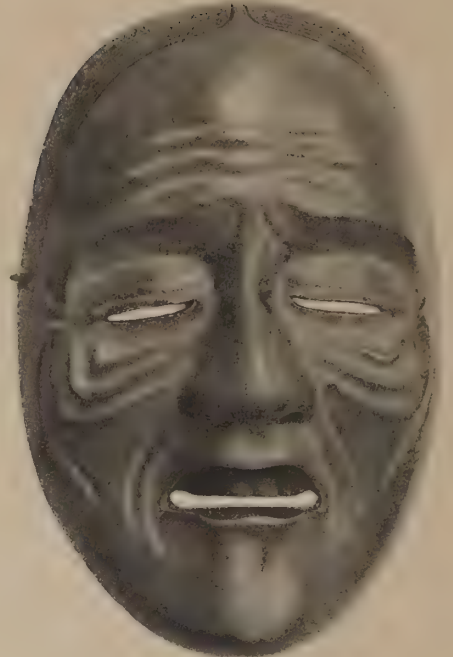
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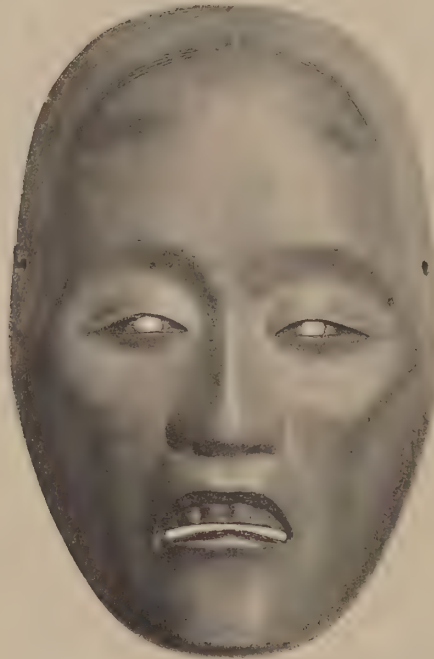
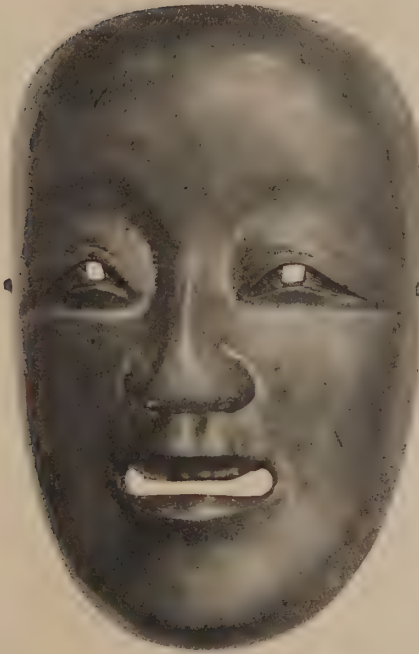
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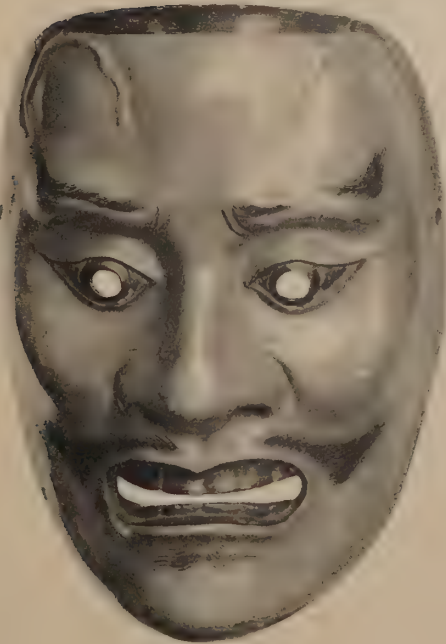
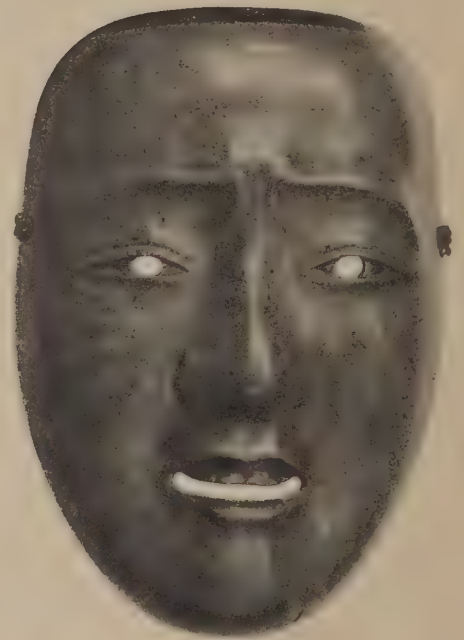
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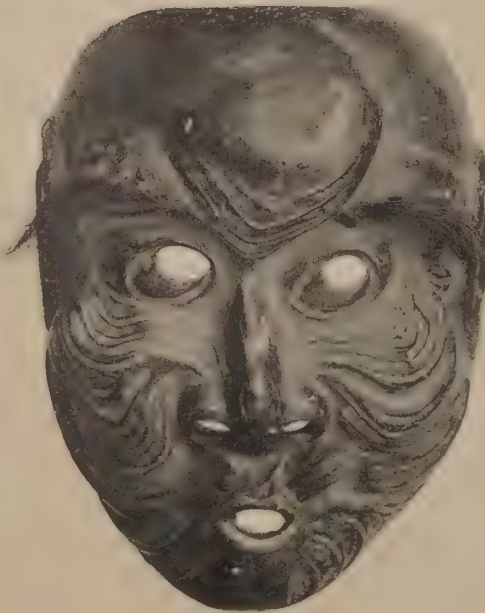
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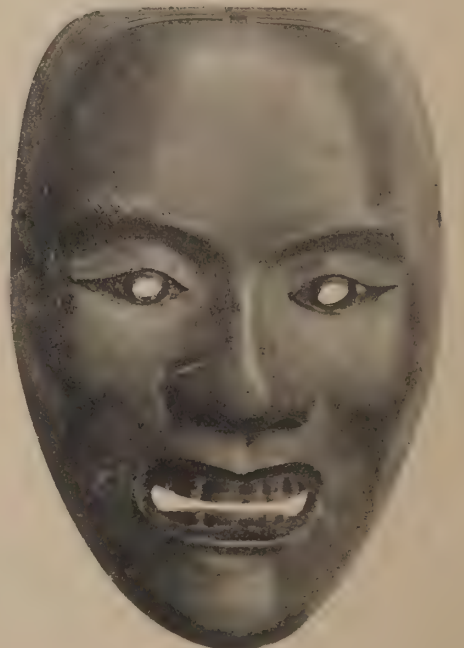


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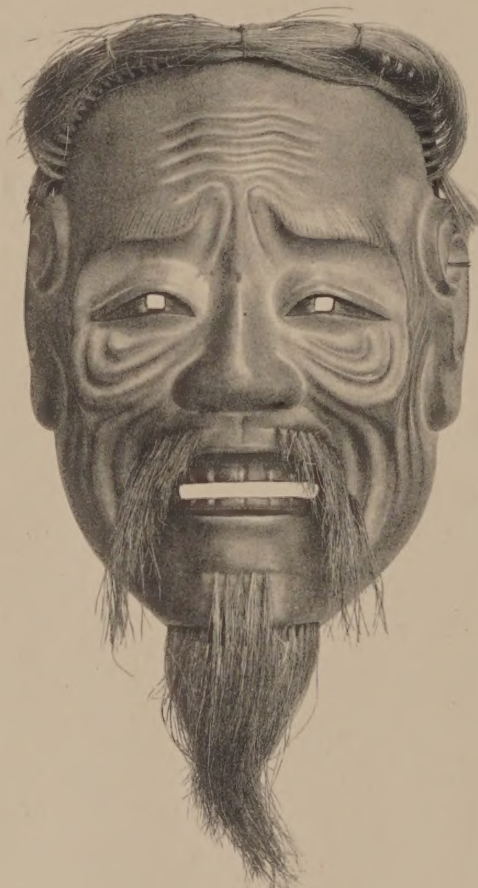
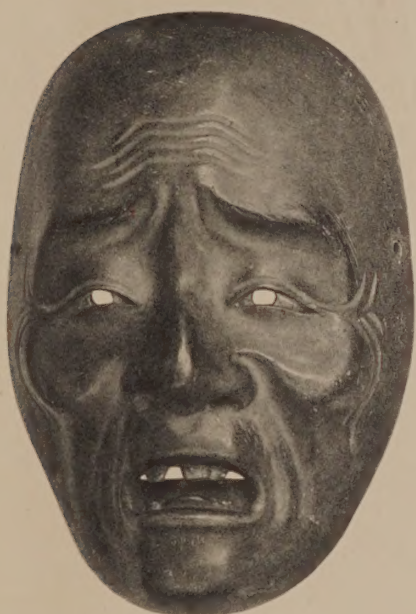


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